

**WANAKA GENEALOGICAL GROUP**

**DECEMBER 2021**

Hi all

Eight members met in Wanaka Station Park on the 29 November to celebrate, in grand Scottish style, the end of another strange year. We shared traditional Scottish food and memories of Hogmanays celebrated by our families in earlier years. The committee wish you all a Happy Christmas, hopefully with your families, and all the best for 2022.

Covid has forced changes both to our programme and to the venues for our meetings. The Wanaka Library roof sprang a leak and the Wanaka Library became unavailable for meetings. The Archives Room was also closed and a group of members had to remove our library books to Doreen Hales home while the roof is being fixed. Thanks Doreen. Thanks also to Louise and Lesly for making their houses available for meetings. We probably won’t be able to return to the library until next year.

We thank those attending our meetings who have generously submitted their research findings or comments relating to the meeting topics giving you all some interesting holiday reading. We hope these stories encourage you to attend meetings and/ or write up your stories for future Newsletters. Genealogical research is a bit like doing a giant puzzle. We often have pieces that don’t seem to fit but Mary Gray’s story reminds us that the information we need is out there somewhere!

**Persistence Does Pay!** Mary Gray, Sept, 2021.

Like most of us, I often wish I had taken more interest in my parents’ family history while they were still alive. So, I have spent hundreds of hours in the last 10 years tracing my forebears and particularly their stories on leaving Britain for a new life in the colonies.

Earlier in the year I had been searching for information in Southland on my Scottish great-grandparents and their 8 offspring, particularly the youngest, my grandmother, Mary. I knew that she had died in the 1918 flu epidemic, leaving my grandfather with three small children to care for, including my mother.  She told me the family lived in Russel (sic) St, Gladstone, Invercargill, close to her grandparents, who had retired from farming to town, but I could find no record of an actual street number for either household.  All the old Stones and P.O. Directories I had seen, only mentioned the street name but no numbers. Without a house number, I couldn’t get any information from LINZ either.

On a visit to Dunedin in May, I spent an afternoon at the Hocken (again!), where I had previously trawled through such directories as available for viewing. But now they have digitised ALL extant years, so you can sit there and search through them, on-line. Finally, in one directory I found my grandparents' house number. Eureka!

Back home, I applied through the LINZ site for the historical deed to the property, but to my utter disappointment, there was no sign of the family name on it.

After puzzling about this for some time, I then decided to check the Invercargill City Council website to see if they have an archives department. Yes, they do! I emailed my request for old rating information for Russel St. and waited hopefully for news. A few days later I heard back from one of the archivists, who told me that that the street numbers had changed since the early 1900’s, hence my not being able to locate the right property. From old subdivision maps, which she kindly sent me, she had worked out the present-day street numbers, and thus the correct addresses, as well as the various sections that my great grandfather had purchased in the street. I was then able to order the correct names deeds from LINZ, which show all the property transactions, and thus both family. From this information I was able to see that Mary had been gifted a section by her father late in 1908, just before her marriage to my grandfather and that was where they built their home. As my mother had told me, the two households were close by back then, with only a vacant section in between, which my mother recalled as “Grandad’s pony paddock”.

I then looked on Google Earth to view the present-day street. Where my great grandparents had lived there are now two town houses, but to my astonishment, my grandparents’ timber villa is still standing and had only recently been sold. I could still access the agent’s sales video, so I was actually able to ”walk" through the house to view the interior. Although it had been much modernised, the exterior was identical to that in a photograph I have of my grandfather and his three small children, standing in front of the house, in 1919. The only change is in the paint colour scheme and the garden frontage.  Subsequent google searching showed every other property in the street has a modern dwelling. How lucky I felt to have found my mother’s family home, looking well-loved and cared for, and still there after all this time.

 Why did I decide that month to search for it, when it was for sale and available to view on-line? I can’t answer that, but I did feel quite emotional on seeing it and thinking about what happened to Mary and the consequences for her family. In this current pandemic I feel very grateful to have been vaccinated, to be able to share in my children’s & grandchildren’s lives, and to pass on our family history to the next generation. For Mary, that was never possible.

**ENGLISH GROUP – 24 September 2021**

John Wedlake lead this meeting at Louise’s home. Those who attended contributed stories relating to why members of their ancestral families had felt the need to leave home. This topic gave rise to an interesting set of stories three of them printed below. John’s Family left Cornwall and his story includes an article he found on this topic.

**Cornwall in the 1860’s – John Wedlake**

My namesake ancestors, Fred and Elizabeth Wedlake, left Cornwall in 1865 and sailed to Victoria, Australia in search of gold. I have often wondered what made them leave their children behind and seek a new life so I did some more research.

From 1871 onward the New Zealand Government began to offer assisted passages to selected migrants and those people nominated by relatives. This was part of Julius Vogel's ambitious scheme to develop New Zealand. It was nine years after they left Cornwall when Fred nominated the four children and they came out on the ship Asia with their aunt in 1874.

My ancestors lived in a semi-rural area in the Parish of Roche, which is a few miles north of St Austell. This is their now derelict cottage.



1 or 2 years ago I spoke to the WGG English group about tin mining in Cornwall. I spoke about the life of a miner down the pit, about pasties for lunch and Peskies the good luck pixies. But it seems the reality of life for a miner’s family in the mid-1800s was actually pretty ugly.

At one point there were over 2,000 tin mines in Cornwall. Cornwall was also rich in copper. But from the 1840s, resource depletion was becoming an issue. The discovery of new copper reserves in east Cornwall maintained production levels into the early 1860s but a banking crisis in 1866 triggered a price crash and production of copper then plummeted catastrophically.

This resulted in a massive exodus of much of the population (referred to as the *Cornish Diaspora*) and it was not until 1971 that the population of Cornwall returned to that (about 350,000) of the mid-19th century.

A driving force for some emigrants was the opportunity for skilled miners to find work abroad. It is estimated that 250,000 Cornish migrated abroad between 1861 and 1901 and these emigrants included farmers, merchants and tradesmen, but miners made up most of the numbers. There is a

well known saying in Cornwall that "a mine is a hole anywhere in the world with at least one Cornishman at the bottom of it!"

Massive emigration to Australia, especially South Australia, and New Zealand took place, and Moonta, South Australia is still known as *Little Cornwall*. In many countries, particularly Australia and Canada towns and cities have been given the name of the towns and villages of Cornwall.

Today Cornwall still has some of the poorest areas in England.

Their reasons for leaving become obvious when one reads this book :-

**The Cornish Miner by A K Hamilton Jenkin, M.A** *1800 - 1870*

*As it was, only too frequently a man would set off from the mine in the darkness of a winter's night in the pelting rain, and, pursuing his intricate course amidst burrows and streams and unfenced shafts by the light of a glimmering lantern, would at last arrive at his journeys' end without finding any comfortable meal awaiting him.  "I have known instances", wrote Mr Jory Henwood to the Commissioners in 1842, "Where men who had to remain in an atmosphere of 96F (36 deg C) whilst at their employ, at a late hour of the night had to walk three miles to their homes.  Some of them were too poor to be well clad, and after so frightful a transition of temperature and so long a walk against a fierce and biting wind have often reached home without a fire and had to creep to bed with no more nourishing food and drink than barley-bread or potatoes with cold water".*

*Some used to carry a miner's lantern, that is, a candle placed in an old miners boot or a treacle-tin pierced with holes. Others stumbled home in the dark as best they could.  It was at times like this that a miners wife would sit listening for every step, a candle burning dimly in the cottage window long after the rest of the population was wrapped in darkness and sleep.  Often in the darkest nights of winter, in a blustering gale, women would be out on the cliffs with lanterns, waiting for their husbands to come up from the mine.*

*One should consider the woman's task in a household of four of five men living in a tiny cottage, one rising before daylight, another going to work at ten at night or arriving back to dinner at 3 in the afternoon, almost all requiring meals at separate times and to be prepared for each.  In spite of all this, and the fact that in the poorer households the women themselves were sometimes out all day working on farms or the tin streams, the Cornish miner's home was generally clean and well ordered.  It was exceedingly rare, the Commissioners of 1842 noted, to meet with an example of squalid filthiness in any members of a Cornish miner's family.*

*The miner's usual dinner which he took with his family on his arrival home (if he hadn't been working by night), consisted of fish, generally salted, potatoes, and tea.  The latter, however, being very dear, the dried leaves of mugwort were frequently substituted for it.  This meal was varied sometimes by a slice of fried green pork (ie home cured bacon) with eggs and potatoes, or else a small lump of meat put into a great dish of potatoes, little enough in many cases by the time 9 or 10 children had all had a share.*

*Pork used to be used everywhere to be more commonly eaten in the mining districts than beef or mutton, because many of the miners kept their own pigs.  On the whole, the Cornish miners ate far less butcher’s meat than other classes of labourer's. "we cannot afford more than 3 or 3 1/2 pounds a week, said one man, before the Commissioner.  With the miner, stated another witness, it is general a 'feast or fast'.  One day he will have his beefsteaks and his good living, and the next he will have his broth.  They live upon broth for some days after it, and they only throw in a bone or perhaps a bit of pork to make it.*

*The actual shortage of butcher's meat did not, perhaps, tell so much upon the miner's health as the roughness and unsuitability of much the food he ate, either through choice or necessity.  In many cases where the miner rose at 4.30 in order to get to the mine and be underground by 6am, his breakfast would consist of only a cup of tea and bread and butter.*

*Setting up House*

*On returning home miners may just as often as not transfer one form of work to another, chiefly among these was building a cottage for himself and of clearing the land for a garden. The miners very seldom borrowed money in order to set about building these houses. The whole thing depended on whether the miners wife had managed to live without deeply getting into debt. If they were badly in debt, every one of these "sturts" as the miners called them, was swallowed up in clearing their liabilities.  If this was not the case they straightway set about building a house in their spare time.*

*The cottages which the miners built varied much according to the character and means of their occupants.  Miners houses are much cleaner and more comfortable than agriculturists" stated one witness in Camborne in 1864. In the Camborne and Redruth districts the modern cottages are well and substantially built, much better than those inhabited by labourers in the Midland counties.  They contain 2,3,4 or 6 rooms, the upper one being in the slanting, high-pitched roof.  Sometimes with 2 families living there.  They have usually garden plots before or behind in which vegetables and potatoes are cultivated.  The older cottages were for the most thatched and contained only 2 rooms.  Few, if any of the cottages at this time were provided with privies or possessed any system of under-drainage.  The floors were generally of lime ash and apt to be very damp.  Little room existed in the older and smaller cottages for the washing of clothes indoors, and hot water systems were of course totally unknown.  The water from most of the mines, is used for domestic purposes, and sometimes 50 women may be seen at once standing round the engine-house, washing the linen of their families in the warm water from the steam engine.*

*Except in districts where loose stone suitable for building was particularly plentiful, the miner generally built the walls of his house of cob or clod, that is a mixture of clay stiffened with chopped straw and beaten hard like concrete.  Houses built in this way had the additional advantage of cheapness.*

*Home life and family*

*In many cases the inside of the miners cottages were clean and spotless then as it is today, and the inhabitants, in spite of cramped conditions, a contented and happy lot.  Seated of an evening round the open heart, with a fire blazing furze, the whole family would be assembled, with perhaps a neighbour or two on his way to night core.*

*So the old life would go on its simple, homely way, till ten o'clock came, and those who were working night core went off to work and the rest of the household to bed.*

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*Marriage & Children*

*Most of the miners often marry young, many of them at age 16, although as is frequent in Celtic communities the matter is often delayed till the circumstances of the girl with whom they have been 'keeping company' render marriage indispensable'.*

*Desertion however in such cases was rare, whilst prostitution was almost unknown in the mining areas.   As a result of early marriages, long families were general in Cornwall, and children consequently had to be sent to ground at 10 years of age, parents would not send them so early except for their necessities. Both in these children and their parents slight indispositions were often aggravated into fatal illnesses through the impossibility of taking any respite from their work.*

*As was to be expected under such conditions, the toll of infant mortality was also high. 55 deaths in every hundred in a mining parish are to be found under the age of 5 years.  A large proportion die from debility within the first year of their existence, and no one who has not seen these miserable specimens of humanity can have the slightest idea of their diseased appearance, small , think and shrivelled, with scarcely enough strength to cry, it seems sometimes almost a crime to attempt to prolong their existence.  Very frequently, under these conditions a doctor would not be sent for at all.  They say "Let the will of the Almighty work its way" - that is very common.   They say - "An infant of this size a medical man cannot do much for"*

*Those that did survive seemed for the most part unaffected by hereditary disease, and, until they had been for some time working underground, were strong and healthy.*

*"You see the children in Wendron parish going about without any stockings or shoes and the picture of health, though they lived in the wildest of places".  Those on the surface have the appearance of robust health, those who go underground soon become pale and show signs of impeded development.*

*"When I visited a large school for miners children at pool, I have never seen a more healthy lot of children collected together.  The children and young women who are employed in picking the ore on the surface have remarkably clear, bright, healthy complexions.  The married women who are seen in the cottages are also very healthy looking".*

I am now convinced that financial hardship drove Fred and Elizabeth to seek out better opportunities in the southern hemisphere. After the gold ran out in Central Otago they all ended up in Dunedin where one son owned a pawn shop in Princes Street and his wife had a grocery store on a site where Greg’s coffee factory now stands in Forth Street.

**Doreen Mear’s family from West Yorkshire**

***What was life like in your ancestor’s home county at the time they emigrated?***

There were four exoduses in my family – well, five if you include my two cousins, a nephew, my great-grandfather William Riley who eventually returned home and me!

The earliest exodus took place between 1875 and 1895. We can trace my father’s family as far back as the 15th century in a cluster of small hamlets – including one named Mearhouse - in the Pennine hills of West Yorkshire in northern England. This is wild and desolate, rugged moorland country, with a meagre subsistence living obtained from tenant farming. My father’s family were handloom weavers who rode into town to the Cloth Hall in Huddersfield from time to time to pitch for their next piece of work from the merchants, collecting the wool and the pattern and then returning in due course with the finished woven cloth for payment. Up in the hills there were plenty of fast-flowing streams of soft water for washing (“scouring”) the wool, after which the womenfolk would card and spin it. The actual weaving was heavy work and therefore generally man’s work. The handlooms were usually on the first floor of their tiny stone cottages, which had rows of windows to let in as much light as possible as of course there was no electricity.

Living conditions were primitive and cramped as families were large, often consisting of ten or so children. Sanitation was poor, as was health, with highly contagious diseases like smallpox and tuberculosis rife and incurable. Infant mortality was high and death of the mother in childbirth was all too common.

Life had got even harder by the mid-1800s, as handloom weaving at home was being edged out by mechanisation and the building of great mills housing spinning machinery and power looms. A tragic victim of this industrial revolution, Jonas Mear committed suicide in 1857 by hanging himself from the crossbar of his loom because he didn’t know where his next piece of work was coming from and had no way of providing for his young family.

By 1880 the last of the little colony of Mears who were handloom weavers had left the outlying hamlets to go and work in the mills around the town. Some millowners were relatively benevolent, perhaps providing part-time schooling for their child workers (as young as 12) if their parents also worked at the mill and were able to contribute a penny a week. Other millowners were exploitative, imposing long hard hours in poor and often dangerous conditions. If the workers voiced their objections, they ran the risk of losing their job and being replaced by other more willing workers. Martin Mear and his mates went on strike but were promptly sacked by the mill management, and then got into trouble with the law for intimidating the new men who had been given their jobs. Two other members of the family, both fitfully employed in the woollen trade, died penniless in the local workhouse.

So it not surprising that many young men especially decided to try their luck overseas. My one and only New Zealand emigrant relative, Ely Riley, was born in a small hillside hamlet, Greetland near Halifax in West Yorkshire. Halifax, like Huddersfield, was a burgeoning textile town and the Rileys were wool dyers, but had worked their way up the ladder to become owner managers rather than working on the shopfloor. Between 1830 and 1860 young Ely’s grandfather Ely Snr was able to transform a small concern into a substantial dyeworks complex employing 36 people, and also built himself a handsome mansion in the process. Ely Snr’s four sons all went into the family business but although Ely Jr worked there for a spell it was not for him. The dyeing process was cold and wet, with heavy hanks of wool soaking in huge vats and hung to dry on racks. The dyes used (at least until the mid-1850s when synthetic dyes derived from coal tar were discovered and developed) were derived from natural sources such as plants, insects or minerals. Many of the chemicals used were toxic, a certain shade of green derived from arsenic for example being referred to as ‘poison green’. Rather than spend his working life in the dyehouse like his father and grandfather before him, Ely Jr packed his bags and in 1895 set off to Australia, before turning up in New Zealand in 1897. He started out as a gardener in New Plymouth, but soon turned to petty crime, becoming a habitual criminal and spending half his life behind bars. He helped build the iconic stone walls of Napier Gaol – from the inside!

His relative, my great-grandfather William Riley was a weaver, but in a great leap of faith, took off in 1874 to Moscow with his fiancée and a chaperone. It must have taken enormous courage to emigrate to Russia, a totally foreign country without even a common alphabet. At the time Russia was working hard to set up and mechanise its own textile industry, so was importing English textile machinery and offering jobs to skilled operatives from the woollen towns of northern England to run it. Great-grandfather secured a job with the largest textile mill in Moscow as a manager and overseer. However the new life was particularly difficult as they lost their first two children, returning briefly to England to ensure the safe arrival of their third. Five years later my grandmother was born in Moscow. However it didn’t take many more years until the Russians had learnt pretty much all they needed to know about the textile business and no longer required foreign expertise, so the family returned to England and to Halifax before the turn of the century.

The second exodus by my family was in the years just after WW1. During the war, the jobs traditionally done by the men had largely been taken over by their womenfolk, who successfully learnt to drive, to farm, to work in factories and operate machinery, so the returning servicemen had great difficulty in settling down again, fitting in and finding work. Many men were carrying war injuries or suffering from the after-effects of gassing or shell-shock, and at least two of my relatives died premature deaths after returning home from their war service. Many men were reduced to taking menial jobs such as labouring or door-to-door hawking. Joseph Mear, from Halifax, was a metal-worker before and during the war, a skill no doubt in high demand for fabricating war supplies, but I suspect this work dried up once the war was over and he decided to try his luck in Australia with his wife Eva in 1925. Tragically within six weeks of their arrival, Eva died following a botched illegal abortion – probably a pregnancy was highly inconvenient if they arrived with no money, no job and uncertain prospects. Joseph never remarried and became something of a jack-of-all-trades, working at a succession of relatively unskilled jobs.

My cousin Horace Mear, from Huddersfield, seems to have been the most successful emigrant. At the start of WW1 he was employed in the textile business as a humble rag maker, but enlisted in the Navy as soon as he was old enough and served in the last year of the war. After being demobbed in 1919, he returned to the textile industry, working as a power loom tuner, but didn’t settle, and in 1922 he set off to Australia. His bride-to-be, Norah, also from Huddersfield and a weaver, joined him 18 months later. He was the lucky one; he quickly found a new job, again as a power loom tuner and spent the rest of his working life as a weaving overlooker in a textile mill.

**Thomas Stolworthy and Matilda Jinkerson** - Kay Curtis

I had to dig deep to find an ancestor who left England to emigrate to another country, until I came across a 1st cousin 5 times removed ! He had an amazing story.

Thomas Stolworthy was born in 1828 in Great Yarmouth, Norfolk,,and married Matilda Jinkerson in 1852. Thomas was an iron worker, the youngest of 10 children – Matilda was also the tenth and last child. They became the only members of their families to be baptized int the Mormon Church in 1853,

and their families turned against them because of their baptisms.

Thomas and Matilda’s first three children died within a short time of their births, and this sadness together with the split with their families influenced their decision to immigrate to America.

The couple travelled from Liverpool to New Orleans on the “Clara Wheeler”, arriving on 12 January 1855. They then gained passage on the steamship “Oceana” to St.Louis, where Thomas worked in a foundry and earnt enough money to outfit themselves for the trek to Salt Lake City.

In 1856, they settled in Cache Valley, Utah, and their fifth child was the first white baby born there and became a curiosity to Indians who had never seen a pale-faced newborn. Sadly this child died at one year old (a fourth child had been born in St.Louis but only lived for two weeks). In 1857 Brigham Young directed them to move to Parown, Utah, and their sixth child, Elizabeth was born. As with the previous children, she was not thriving – and it was as she lay dying that a very strange visit occurred.

The story goes like this: “Suddenly the door of the room opened and a strange man entered. His hair was white and long, and he wore a white flowing beard. He seemed to be old, yet his step was firm and vigorous, and he said in a soft musical voice “It is nice in here, how good the fire feels’”. Matilda led him to the crib where he bent low, touching the baby’s head with his long white hands and speaking softly words that she could not understand. He then stood up and said ‘Sister Stolworthy, you have known great sorrow and bereavement. Your little girl will live and raise a family and become a leader among women. Peace be to this house’, and he went out, gently closing the door behind him. Matilda went to the crib, and found the baby was breathing easier, and the fever was broken.”

Elizabeth eventually survived well into her eighties, and herself became a mother of 10 children and served three times as Relief Society President in her community of Tropic, Utah.

Thomas and Matilda themselves had many more journeys, through Utah and Nevada, finally settling in Orderville, Utah in 1874. Thomas died in 1916, and Matilda in 1918.

**IRISH GROUP – 29 October 2021**

Kay Curtis lead this meeting at Lesly’s home, exploring websites that gave background information on Irish names. Some of those present struck it lucky but, possibly because some of our families were part of the ‘Plantation’ or their family names had been anglisized, others were not so lucky.

We also had an impromptu Committee Meeting to discuss meeting topics. We still need a topic for our February meeting so any suggestions would be welcome.

**Good websites for Irish surnames are:**

www.findmypast.com <http://www.findmypast.com> has a data base, "Ireland Surnames & Family Histories".

This record set has a collection of publications, including information from the 1894 Matheson report.

<http://www.ireland-information.com> Click on "Genealogy and Surnames", and the 100 most popular names are listed together with their meanings and links to further information.

[www.ancestryireland.com/family-records/distribution-of-surnames-in-Ireland-1890-mathesons-special-report/](http://www.ancestryireland.com/family-records/distribution-of-surnames-in-Ireland-1890-mathesons-special-report/)

<http://www.ancestryireland.com/family-records/distribution-of-surnames-in-Ireland-1890-mathesons-special-report/> Here you can search for free in the Ulster Historical Foundation site.

**WRITER’S GROUP – 26 November 2021**

A small attendance of 3 members this month but nevertheless we always make progress of a sort, even if it's just to reconfirm our goals! These are always quite varied and this month they range from finding the best way to print a photograph, creating 2 charts before Christmas to persevering with the collecting, organising and writing of a book.

Sue Evans writes of her experiences at *The writers group!*

*"I attend said group, suck up information from others and then tackle the challenge I have set myself when I go home!*

*That challenge is to produce a family history book covering both parents genealogy back to their great grandparents to be completed before Mums would have been 100th birthday in February 2022.*

*Definition: (Genealogy is the study of families, family history, and the tracing of their lineages. Genealogists use oral interviews, historical records, genetic analysis, and other records to obtain information about a family and to demonstrate kinship and pedigrees of its members)*

*The Genealogy definition was daunting in itself when all the auld folk have passed, the genetic analysis is poor (95% Scottish?) Nope 71% Scandinavian…*

*And the willingness to contribute by siblings is poor!*

*The writers group confirm all of the above and still succeeds.*

*Advice condensed is make a plan, and cover who, what, when, how.*

*Sort the text, reference documents and photos.*

*Historic information is sourced through Papers Past, family documents, all the sites on-line and the treasures of “find a grave”, Family tree and DNA matches.*

*Recording for fumble fingers is greatly helped with the app “Pages” and the copies now always saved in word.*

*Make a plan they say!  Dads side, Mums side then me!*

*Now, when to draw the line and say that’s it then solve the where to and how to send it away for printing!beginning”*

**PROGRAMME FROM 21 January to 25th March 2022**

Friday 28 January – DNA Group meeting, ‘Are you getting the most out of your DNA Results.’ Plus “Any new discoveries to report’, Wanaka Library 2pm.

Monday 14 February – Writers/ Techy Tips Meeting, ‘Making a Photo Book’, Wanaka Library 2pm.

Friday 25 February – to be decided.

Friday 25 March – proposed trip to Bendigo. Details later.

Members will be available for help with research and our Library will be open for lending before all meetings held at the Wanaka Library. Times will be advertised.

**Committee**

Secretary: Lesly Stewart

Treasurer: Kay Curtis

Erena Barker

Doreen Hale

Louise Primrose

Margaret Thomlinson

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